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A NEW LINGUISTIC FAMILY IN CALIFORNIA.

BY H. W. HENSHAW.

In delving among the rarer books and manuscripts which relate to the early history of America, the student not unfrequently comes across mention of tribes which have vanished and have left their names as the sole record of their existence. They died and left no monuments. Yet the researches of the archæologist may bring to light the stone implements such peoples made and used, and thus, to a limited degree, we may obtain glimpses of the culture state they lived in and form some idea of their mode of life.

Substantial as are such archæologic clews and important links as they are in reconstructing the past life of their former owners, they are by no means the most important of the heir-looms which research occasionally places in the hands of the student, since they throw little or no light upon the relationship of their owners and but dimly pierce the obscurity of their past history. Evidence of a much more satisfactory sort occasionally awaits the search of the linguistic student, when in turning the forgotten pages of history he finds vocabularies of the speech of vanished races, and is thus let in, as it were, to their inner selves, obtaining glimpses of their daily thought and religious ideas, and receiving hints of their relationship to other and it may be to living tribes. The latter may to some extent repeat their habits and peculiarities, and perhaps may furnish suggestions of their origin, migrations, etc. How clear an insight into such matters may be afforded by a study of the language of a people and how minute the details gathered by the linguistic student is to be seen by the remarkable results obtained by students of the Aryan languages, who are able to present a panorama of the daily life and thought of the old Aryans almost as though they had witnessed what they describe.

It is the purpose of the present paper to call attention to one of these vanished peoples, not because the facts to be given concerning it are either many or satisfactory, but with the primary purpose of recording such facts as are known, few and unsatisfactory though they be, and more important still of directing the attention of

students to the importance of searching for similar cases. In the present instance, indeed, even more may be hoped; for, while the people in question has been lost sight of for a hundred years or more, it is possible that a few survivors yet remain, and it is to be hoped that this fact once known the zeal of investigators may be stimulated and new and richer gleanings be added to the small store already harvested.

The people I refer to are a tribe known by the name *Esseleh* or *Ecclemachs*, and formerly lived in California, to the east and south of the Monterey Bay, and with other neighboring tribes were gathered into the San Carlos Mission of Monterey, in 1770.

The first clew to the existence of a group of California Indians different from any recognized by recent students was obtained by Mr. Curtin, of the Bureau of Ethnology, from the rare collection of newspaper articles by Alexander Taylor. Though not a learned man, Taylor was an indefatigable student and reader, as well as an assiduous collector of Indian lore. Between the years 1860 to 1863 he published in the *California Farmer*, a weekly paper, all the material bearing upon California Indians he himself was able to gather and, as well, copious notes and extracts from the Mission records and from such of the early writers as he had access to. The result is a mass of material badly arranged, or, more properly, not arranged at all, illy digested and not always wisely selected, but still forming a contribution to the subject neither to be despised nor to be overlooked by the student of to-day. This author copies two vocabularies, one from Galiano, the other from La Perouse, and a comparison of the 39 words they contain seemed to show that here was an absolutely distinct linguistic family which had been entirely overlooked. The early date at which these vocabularies were taken, 1786 and 1792, and the fact that the Indians appear not to have been seen by any subsequent investigator, seemed to negative the hope that any of them might still survive. The doubt of there being any survivors seemed to be strengthened by the fact that Taylor visited Monterey in 1856 and took a vocabulary of the supposed "*Eselenes*," which, however, unfortunately turns out to represent the neighboring *Rumsien* language of which there are a number of good vocabularies extant. As the writer was about to visit the west coast for the purpose of linguistic investigations, the rediscovery of the lost *Esselen* tribe was made a prime object of the trip. For this, as well as for other linguistic purposes, an exhaustive search was made

through the counties of Marin and Monterey, to the north and south of San Francisco. While some very interesting linguistic results were obtained, some time passed before any clew to the Esselen people was secured.

It is a melancholy fact that in middle California the Indians have almost wholly disappeared. Here and there upon the outskirts of some town or in the nooks of some remote cañon of the foothills is still left an occasional Indian, man or woman, more rarely a family, whose identity, however, is so swallowed up by the prevailing Mexican type that one may spend days in a town inquiring for Indians without finding a person who chances to be acquainted with an aborigine. There are many Mexicans in middle and southern California who socially and physically are not a whit superior to the Indian, and in the motley throng the occasional Indian passes unnoticed except by the few. Their identity is the more readily lost because all of them, without exception, speak the Mexican dialect of Spanish, and never by any chance let fall in public a word of their own language; and indeed why should they? They are now so few in number that the old people rarely have a chance to converse together in their native tongue, while the young, who are mostly half-breeds, associate chiefly with the Mexicans and never learn the language of their fathers. Indeed it is a fact that in a number of instances the children of Indian women heard their mother's language for the first time when she repeated words and phrases to me for the purpose of notation.

Failing to discover anyone in San Francisco who knew of the whereabouts of Indians in either counties above mentioned, I set out for the vicinity of San Rafael Mission, 75 miles to the north. Knowing how tenaciously the Indians cling to the neighborhood of their former home, I selected this as the most likely spot to find any survivors. Not a single Indian, however, lives in or near the town, nor could I learn of any in the neighboring towns; when finally I heard of the existence of a few it was on the coast to the north, near the entrance of Tomales Bay. Here I found several men and two women, from one of whom I obtained an excellent vocabulary of the dialect spoken at the Mission. With this I was obliged to rest content, as none of the Indians on the Bay knew of others or were aware of the existence of any dialect but the one I obtained. The interest attaching to the language of this locality is due to the fact that its relationship has been the subject of discussion. By some

scholars it has been assumed that one linguistic family occupied the peninsula north of San Francisco Bay and the whole country coast-wise for a considerable distance south and as far east as the headwaters of the Moquelumne, Calaveras, Tuolumne, Merced, and others. A comparison of vocabularies, now in possession of the Bureau, by Mr. Curtin and myself, however, had raised doubts as to the correctness of this conclusion. As the result of a study of the vocabulary obtained at Tomales Bay with the others from this region in possession of the Bureau, and those subsequently obtained at the south, I am now convinced that the area in question was formerly occupied by two entirely distinct families.

Subsequently I journeyed to the southward and visited Santa Cruz, where formerly was another old mission. Upon the outskirts of this town and almost in the shadow of the church—the officiating priest of which told me there were absolutely no Indians in the neighborhood—I found a little colony of Indians and half-breeds who had a respectable knowledge of the dialects formerly spoken by the Indians of the locality. To every Indian I met I repeated word for word the Esselen vocabularies of Galiano and Lamanon, but none of them recognized the words as of a language they ever heard spoken. Disappointed, though by no means disheartened, I turned to Monterey as the Mecca of my hopes, as there I expected to find a considerable number of the once numerous old Mission Indians still clinging to the land formerly filled by their fathers. On the contrary, nearly all the Indians have disappeared and a number of days passed before I found myself face to face with an aborigine; at the present time there are probably not more than half a dozen pure bloods found anywhere in this locality. One of the number, an old woman of perhaps 65, proved an honest and willing subject and she herself volunteered the information I had so long sought. While mentioning the names of the rancherias formerly about the mission, she spoke of the Esselen tribe as a people who lived to the east and south of the Bay and whose language differed entirely from her own, the Rumsien. In reply to my eager request to speak a word or two of the language she said that if I would give her time to think she was certain of her ability to do so, as in early life she had mingled much with the tribe, her father having married an Esselen woman. Believing I had found the long-desired clew I repeated the Esselen numerals as given by Galiano and she at once recognized the words for one and three. As the result of much hard thinking for several

days, she succeeded, with the help of a second old woman, in recalling over 100 words and some 50 short phrases of the language—a priceless boon to the linguistic student. Though their study is not yet completed they have served to dispel any doubt as to the distinctness of the stock they represent.

Guided by the directions of old Eulalia, I subsequently visited the Salinas Valley to the south, in search of two women who had married Mexicans and who she said were of Esselen blood. The marriage of Mexicans with Indians is usually a very informal sort of marriage, and the tie is usually dissolved on short notice at the option of one or both parties. Accordingly my endeavor to discover these women by hunting up their respective husbands proved a wild-goose chase indeed. The Mexican husband was not hard to find, and from him I could always learn the name and whereabouts of his successor, only to discover that the wife had migrated to another settlement or taken up her abode in some distant cañon. After much search I found both women, but alas for my hopes, neither remembered a word of their own language. At least so they said and I was compelled reluctantly to believe them. Both claimed to have lived with the Rumsien tribe so long as to have forgotten their own tongue.

However, my search was not entirely unrewarded, for living in the same house with one of them was an aged and blind Indian who also spoke the Rumsien tongue, but who recalled a few words of Esselen and who verified quite a number of those given me by the Monterey woman. In addition he gave some valuable facts as to the habitat of the tribe. He also told me that five years before an Esselen man lived near the adjoining town of Cayucas who really spoke the language, not merely a few words of it, but a sufficient number to converse. He was the last one who did so, so far as he knew. This Esselen went south towards Santa Barbara and had not been heard of since. As I myself was in Santa Barbara in 1884 and made most careful inquiry as to all the Indians of that vicinity—and there are very few of them—it is only too probable that this, the last survivor of the Esselen people who spoke his own language has gone the way of the rest. As the result, therefore, of my investigations I was able to collect 110 words and 68 phrases and sentences of this almost extinct language. Singularly enough these were obtained from the lips of an alien people—a sad commentary upon the fate that has overtaken some of the American tribes.

OMAHA RELIGIOUS PRACTICES.—At the meeting of the Society November 5, 1889, Mr. J. Owen Dorsey read an important paper on the above subject.

Mr. Dorsey began with an account of the Omaha invocation to the sun, and gave a free translation of the usual formula employed. Next came a description of trapping practices. Tobacco was presented and prayers were made to the game, trap, medicine or charm, pack-strap, chief tent-pole, etc., each object thus addressed being personified.

The Omahas believed in different gods or mysterious powers before they learned of our Supreme God, the God of monotheism. This is in accord with some of the statements of the late S. R. Riggs concerning the Dakotas, and it agrees with what Mr. Dorsey had learned from the Ponkas in 1872-'73.

The concluding part of the paper treated of personal mystery decorations, and was illustrated by original sketches painted by an Omaha. Some of these decorations were worn on garments, others appeared on tents. The use of such decorations was restricted to members of the different orders of shamans.

This paper will be published in full in the 8th Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology.

H. W. HENSHAW.

ESKIMO OR INDIAN?—At the meeting of the Swedish Anthropological and Geographical Society on October 10, 1888, a paper was read by E. Dahlgren on recent investigations in regard to the voyages of the old Norsemen to Vinland. The paper was chiefly a resumé of Professor Storm's "Studier over Vinlandsreiserne, Vinlands Geografi og Ethnografi."

To Professor Storm's opinion, quoted by the speaker, that the "Skrälings" met by the Norsemen in America were not Eskimo but Indians (Micmacs and Beothuks), Baron Nordenskiöld replied that he was convinced from his personal acquaintance with Eskimo, as well as from a comprehensive study of the older Arctic literature, that the "Skrälings" could be nothing but Eskimo. (*Ymer*, v. 18, pp. xvii-xix.)

JOHN MURDOCH.